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Policies and Procedures

Title: Volunteer Program and Unpaid Trainees

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This Directive describes ARS policy and procedures pertaining to the use of volunteers and the acceptance of unpaid services from persons enrolled in training or work experience programs. This Directive does not apply to collaborators.

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1. Abbreviations

- CFR - Code of Federal Regulations
- LAO - Location Administrative Officer
- PD - Personnel Division
- USC - United States Code

2. Forms

SF-52 Request for Personnel Action

SF-171 Application for Federal Employment

3. Definitions

Unpaid trainees are individuals in a training, work experience, or rehabilitation program whose services are obtained through a sponsoring organization. ARS serves as a training site or host Agency. The sponsor, which may be an agency of local government or a community organization, sometimes pays the trainees or gives them a stipend to cover their expenses. Most states, for example, have summer youth programs funded by the Joint Partnership Training Act and operated by a local government or private industry council. The participants are covered by a contract with the sponsor.

Volunteers are individuals who offer their services to ARS on their own initiative without compensation or reimbursement. Student volunteers may receive academic credit for their work.

4. Authorities

Part 308, 5 CFR

Section 2272, Title 7 USC

5. Policy

It is ARS policy to encourage the full use of volunteers and unpaid trainees. These programs provide valuable assistance in fulfilling our mission while providing the participants with useful experience, marketable skills, and an opportunity to perform a public service.

6. Responsibilities

The LAO is responsible for approving, on behalf of ARS, agreements to accept unpaid trainees and volunteers.

The Servicing Personnel Specialist is responsible for providing technical assistance to local managers and ensuring that volunteer appointments are effected and processed in accordance with regulations.

7. Requirements And Conditions

Age. Participants in either program must be at least 16 years of age. However, trainees in a program established under the Joint Partnership Training Act may be 14 or 15.

Status. Volunteers and unpaid trainees are not considered Federal employees for any purposes except for liability and injury compensation. They do not count against ceiling allocations. US citizenship is not required.

Duties. There are no general restrictions on the assignment of duties. Supervisors must be prudent in the assignment of potentially hazardous duties and ensure that the participant is properly trained and capable of executing the duties competently and safely. ARS is responsible for their actions while on duty, the manner in which they carry out their duties, and for any injuries they may incur.

Appointments. Volunteers should be given temporary appointments (1 year or a shorter period). Unpaid trainees are covered by a contract, rather than an appointment. Neither type of service is creditable for retirement, leave, or other purpose if the individual is later hired by the government, though it may count as experience in meeting the qualifications requirements.

Documentation. Volunteers must sign a statement which describes the conditions of their service, including an understanding that the volunteer service is not considered Federal employment and that no compensation is provided. Unpaid trainees must be covered by a contract with similar wording.

8. Procedures

LAO

- For the appointment of volunteers, prepare an SF-52 showing "Appointment-Volunteer" and

submit it to PD along with an SF-171 (or a substitute containing basic identifying information).

- For unpaid trainees, approve contracts with sponsoring organizations, provided the contract contains no language which unduly restricts ARS management, implies any obligation to compensate the sponsor or the trainee, or indicates any obligation to employ the individual after training. The Servicing Personnel Specialist should be consulted if there is any question about the wording of the agreement. Unpaid trainees do not receive appointments. Therefore, no documents need to be submitted to PD.

Servicing Personnel Specialist

- Effect volunteer appointments in accordance with regulations.
- Assist local managers if any questions arise about the appropriateness of ARS participation in a training program or the wording of a contract.

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